

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

The House Select Committee on High Speed Internet in Rural Areas held seven meetings from March 2008 through January 2009. At each meeting the Committee provided interested parties an opportunity to be heard on the issues and received additional comments from the public. Among the parties presenting testimony were broadband services providers, representatives of the e-NC Authority, Windows on the World, MCNC, the State Library, Connected Nation, various education and business organizations, public officials, concerned citizens, and citizen advocacy groups. All the parties acknowledged the critical importance of high speed internet access. Service providers view high speed internet as an important part of their future business plan, while citizens see it as a necessity for educating their children, conducting their small businesses, and participating in the culture of the information age. Universally available high speed internet deployment is essential for North Carolina's economic growth and prosperity.

March 18, 2008 Meeting Summary

The Committee held its first meeting on March 18, 2008. The Chairman gave a brief overview of the Committee's charge to examine the availability of high speed internet in the State, and to consider the feasibility of legislation that would facilitate joint efforts to ensure that citizens in our State have access to high speed internet. The availability of high speed internet may become the new backbone of our economical and educational growth.

Jane Smith Patterson (Executive Director, e-NC Authority) and Joanna Wright (Senior Program Director for Intelligence, Communications and Outreach) presented information concerning e-NC and its efforts to increase broadband connectivity in this State.

Myra Best (Executive Director, Business Education Technology Alliance) provided information concerning a joint report on information technology presented to the General Assembly in January of 2008. The report focused on the use of technology in the State's public schools and how it can impact educational instruction in the 21st century.

Mark Johnson (CTO and VP, Operations and Infrastructure, MCNC) reviewed the history of MCNC and the role of the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN) in the connectivity of public schools within the state. When first funded by the General Assembly in 1980, the Microelectronics Center of North Carolina (now known as MCNC) was